

Safety and Security Task Force

In November 2018, two days after the shooting at Tree of Life, Or Hadash established a Security Task Force, now called The Safety and Security Task Force. Members of the task force have been attending workshops, webinars, meetings with members of law enforcement agencies, and leaders of other area synagogues to seek information on best practices that balance the desire to be welcoming and the need to be safe.

The stated mission of the Safety and Security Task Force is:

To identify best practices and formulate recommendations regarding procedures, processes, equipment, training and building modifications necessary to address legitimate safety and security concerns of the Or Hadash Congregation. These recommendations will be presented to the Board of Directors and implemented by Board designees.

Currently implemented:

- Controlled access system consisting of fob activated entrances at the porch and solarium, and surveillance cameras around the building perimeter.
- 15 panic buttons installed throughout the building. These buttons are connected to the County-wide Law Enforcement Alerting System and in an emergency, silently calls the Upper Dublin Police. There is also a portable unit to be used by greeters and the SMILE school.
- Uniformed, armed security personnel are stationed at doors at High Holidays and events open to the broad public.
- A building assessment has been completed and the need for several physical modifications has been recognized.
- A grant application was submitted to support physical modifications – this was not funded on the first round.

Proposed procedures

- Contact with UD Police on a weekly basis to inform them of all selected activities taking place at OH. UD Police will patrol the area during such activities.
- Establishment of consistent building entry procedures
- Funds are being sought through the grant process for physical modifications to improve safety and security.
- Seeking an effective communication system within the school and throughout the building
- First tier emergency preparedness and situational awareness training for Board, Committee Chairs and staff by Montgomery County Public Safety Training Academy. Additional sessions to follow to train greeters, teachers and other OH members.
- Posting of emergency evacuation routes and assembly points
- Establishment of “Shelter-in-place” locations
- Procurement of AED and First Aid equipment and training

The OH SSTF welcomes all input from the community on policies, equipment, funding sources, etc. We plan to have dialogue sessions with congregants to get feedback on safety/security steps taken so far and additional needs. Any congregants interested in helping/joining the Safety and Security Task Force should get in touch with Phil Rosenberg, Eileen Kupersmith or Babette Zemel.